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ABSTRACT

Most students planning to enter college do so immediately after graduating from high school, and most baccalaureate programs can be completed within 4 years. Taking longer may have a variety of causes and a number of implications, including costs for the individual and the institution. Approximately 31% of college graduates in 1990 completed their baccalaureate degree within 4 years of graduating from high school, while 43% completed it within 4 years of entering college. This percentage was larger for females than males, for students at private colleges than for those at public colleges, and for White students than for Blacks, Hispanic Americans, or American Indians. Between 1977 and 1990, the percentage completing college within 4 years of graduating from high school declined and the percentage taking more than 6 years to graduate increased. Two tables present statistics about graduates by sex, control of institution, and race and ethnicity. Two graphs illustrate trends in times of degree completion. (SLD)

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TIME TO COMPLETE BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

National Center for Education Statistics
Indicator of the Month, October 1993

TM021082

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INDICATOR of the MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

October 1993

Time to complete baccalaureate degree

A majority of those planning to enroll in college do so immediately after graduating from high school and most baccalaureate programs can be completed within 4 years of entering. Taking longer to graduate may result from delaying entrance, changing schools or majors, stopping out, or taking reduced course loads for financial, academic, or social reasons. Such delays can be costly both to the institution and the individual.

- **About 31 percent of the college graduates in 1990 completed their baccalaureate degree within 4 years of graduating from high school, while 43 percent completed it within 4 years of entering college.**
- **In 1990, the percentage completing college within 4 years of starting was larger for females than males, for students at private colleges than those at public colleges, and for whites than blacks, Hispanics or American Indians.**
- **Between 1977 and 1990, the percentage completing college within 4 years of graduating from high school declined, while the percentage taking more than 6 years to graduate increased during that time.**

Percentage of college graduates completing the baccalaureate degree within various years of graduating from high school, by sex: Year of college graduation 1977, 1986, and 1990

	Total				Male				Female			
Year of college graduation	4 or fewer years	5 or fewer years	6 or fewer years	More than 6 years	4 or fewer years	5 or fewer years	6 or fewer years	More than 6 years	4 or fewer years	5 or fewer years	6 or fewer years	More than 6 years
1977	45.4	67.2	75.3	24.7	39.2	61.8	71.1	28.9	52.8	73.8	80.5	19.5
1986	34.5	60.2	70.8	29.2	30.8	57.4	69.8	30.2	38.2	62.9	71.8	28.2
1990	31.1	57.2	68.4	31.6	26.6	54.3	67.6	32.4	35.1	59.8	69.1	30.9

Percentage of college graduates completing the baccalaureate degree within various years of starting college, by sex, control of institution, and race/ethnicity: Year of college graduation 1990

Characteristic	4 or fewer years	5 or fewer years	6 or fewer years	More than 6 years
Total	43.3	70.8	81.0	19.0
Sex				
Male	38.9	68.9	80.9	19.1
Female	47.4	72.5	81.1	18.9
Control of institution				
Public	36.1	67.2	79.3	20.7
Private	57.9	78.1	84.5	15.5
Race/ethnicity				
White	44.4	71.6	81.5	18.5
Black	37.0	65.1	77.6	22.4
Hispanic	31.1	60.3	72.9	27.1
Asian	44.4	76.1	85.7	14.3
American Indian	26.6	47.7	59.0	41.0

NOTE: Revised from previously published data. For the calculation of elapsed times, the actual month of the award of the baccalaureate degree was used. The month of high school graduation was assumed to be June. The month of starting college was assumed to be September.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Recent College Graduate surveys.

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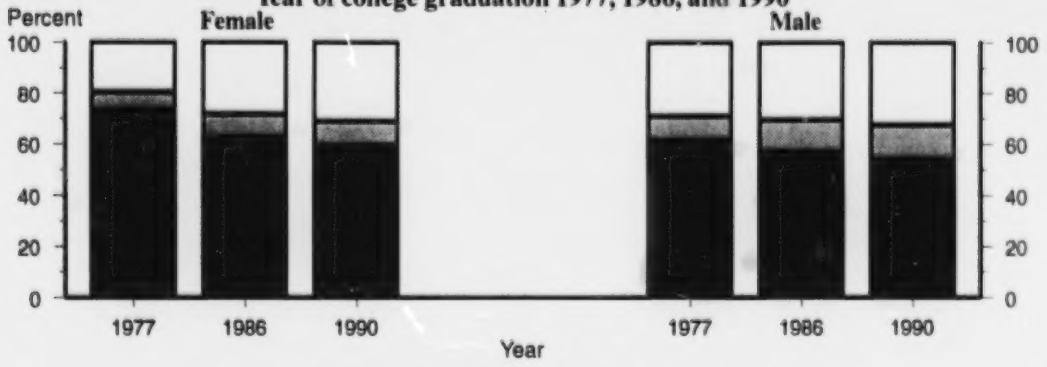
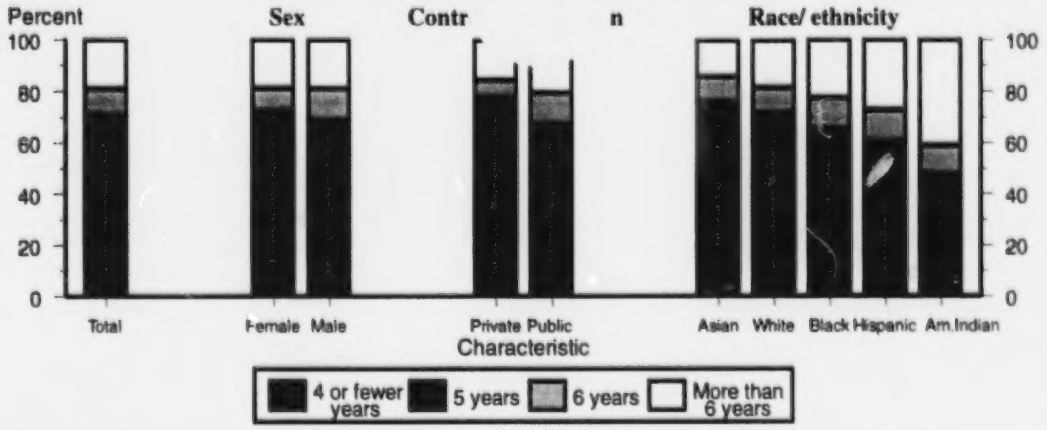
Time to complete baccalaureate degree

Percentage of college graduates completing the baccalaureate degree within various years of graduating from high school: Year of college graduation 1977, 1986, and 1990



Percentage of college graduates completing the baccalaureate degree within various years of starting college: Year of college graduation 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Recent College Graduate surveys.

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